clip database includes find similar clips indicia and keywords. The find similar clips indicia include hidden criteria that relate to the subject matter of the related media clip, such as artistic style, color, or shape. The find similar clips indicia and the keywords describe associated media clips stored in the media clip database.

The invention provides a method that generally comprises, in response to a user selecting a media clip, retrieving information, including hidden criteria associated with find similar clips indicia and keywords, associated with the selected media clip from the media clip database. This form of the method further comprises simultaneously presenting to the user for selection by the user (i) the keywords associated with the media clip and (ii) the find similar clips indicia having associated hidden criteria. The method also comprises, in response to the user creating search criteria by selecting one or more of the keywords associated with the selected media clip and/or the find similar clips indicia associated with the selected media clip, retrieving all media clips in the media clip database that match the search criteria created by the user.

The invention also provides a user interface for a visual thesaurus for a media clip database associated with a multimedia application program, the media clip database containing information, including hidden criteria associated with find similar clips indicia and keywords, that describes each associated media clip in the media clip database. Directly in response to the user selecting a media clip from the media clip database, the method provides for displaying to the user an option for finding similar media clips that have an associated find similar clips indicia hidden criteria and/or keyword associated with the selected clip.

The invention also provides a computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the foregoing methods.

The invention further provides an apparatus for searching a plurality of media clips comprising a processing unit and a storage medium coupled to the processing unit. The storage medium stores program code implemented by the processing unit for (i) providing an interface for a user to select a media clip from a media clip database associated with a multimedia application program, wherein the media clip database contains information, including hidden criteria associated with find similar clips indicia and keywords, that describes each associated media clip in the media clip database; (ii) providing an interface for the user to select search criteria based on find similar clips indicia hidden criteria and/or a keyword associated with the selected media clips; and (iii) in response to the user selecting a media clip and the search criteria, retrieving all media clips in the media clip database that have associated find similar clips indicia hidden criteria and/or a keyword that matches the selected search criteria for the selected media clip.

The invention also provides an apparatus for providing a user interface for a visual thesaurus for a media clip database associated with a multimedia application program wherein the media clip database contains information, including hidden criteria associated with find similar clips indicia and keywords, that describes each associated media clip in the media clip database. The apparatus comprises a processing unit and a storage medium coupled to the processing unit. The storage medium stores program code implemented by the processing unit for displaying to a user an option for finding similar media clips that have associated find similar clips indicia hidden criteria and/or a keyword that matches an associated keyword for a selected media clip directly in response to the user selecting the media clip.

In summary, both the method and apparatus employ two techniques that can be used separately or together to select media clips from a media clip database--keywords associated with a media clip being viewed and/or a find similar clips indicia that has hidden criteria, i.e., criteria not observable by a user and not changeable by a user. As noted above, examples of find similar clips indicia having hidden criteria are artistic style, color, and shape. These find similar clips indicia have hidden criteria that, as noted above, cannot be modified by a user.

United States Patent No. 5,493,677 (Balogh et al.)

Balogh et al. generally discloses retrieving images using a natural language interface. Digitized images are associated with English language captions and other data, collectively known as the metadata associated with the images. A natural language processing database removes ambiguities from the metadata, and the images in the metadata are stored in databases. A user forms a search query, and natural language processing is used to determine matches between the query and the stored metadata. Images corresponding to the matches are then viewed, and desired images are selected for licensing. The license terms for selected images are displayed and a subset of the selected images is ordered as desired by the user.

In summary, Balogh et al. discloses retrieving images using a natural language interface and English language metadata associated with the image. Balogh et al. fails to teach or suggest a find similar clips indicia having hidden criteria such as artistic style criteria, color criteria, or shape criteria. Further, Balogh et al. fails to teach or suggest causing the retrieval of keywords associated with a selected media image from a media clip database. Balogh et al. also fails to teach or suggest presenting the retrieved keywords. Balogh et al. additionally fails to teach or suggest enabling a user to select search criteria based on the keywords associated with a selected media clip to retrieve all media clips in a media clip database that have matching keywords. While Balogh et al. purportedly teaches that information inquiries are processed as in conventional keyword searching techniques (col. 12, lines 9-11), Balogh et al. does not disclose

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displaying keywords associated with a selected multimedia clip for selection by a user for subsequent searching.

Remarks accompanying the Office Action disagree with the foregoing discussion of Balogh et al.'s lack of teaching of the use of keywords. In response to applicants' arguments, the Office Action states that Balogh et al.'s "captioner" provides each image with metadata in the form of a caption describing salient features of an image, bibliographic data, "suggest fields," and attributes for each image. Since said metadata can include descriptive words, as well as teaching that captions/bibliographic information can be reused for iterative query, and since Balogh et al. teaches that keyword searching can be applied to querying (col. 12, lines 8-14, being referenced), said teachings provide a reasonable suggestion to one of ordinary skill in the art of the use of metadata as keywords. The remarks further state that, in addition, the metadata is displayed to a user for subsequent querying of images. The remarks further state that although Balogh et al. teaches an embodiment comprising natural language sentence captions, the words of said sentences are suggestive of keywords, since Balogh et al. teaches parsing a query into individual tokens representing single words or multiwords, said words subsequently matched to various captions within the search process. Balogh et al. col. 12, lines 33-37, are referenced. Applicants respectfully disagree. Balogh et al. does not disclose displaying keywords for a user to use when creating search criteria. Applicants submit that captions/bibliographic information is not the same as keywords, which are more precise.

While applicants respectfully disagree with the foregoing discussion of the teachings of Balogh et al., applicants agree with the Office Action's recognition that Balogh et al. does not disclose anything whatsoever remotely related to displaying or providing a find similar clips indicia having hidden criteria such as, for example, artistic style criteria, color criteria, and shape criteria. As noted above, hidden criteria are criteria that are not changeable by a user. Further, hidden criteria are not displayed to a user. Only the broad indicia--artistic style, color, or shape-- are displayed.

United States Patent No. 5,696,964 (Cox et al.)

Cox et al. is generally directed toward a multimedia database retrieval system that maintains a "posterior probability distribution" that each item in the database is the target of a search. Cox et al. discloses a queryless multimedia database search method, which incorporates a Bayesian interface engine that refines its answer with each user response. The set of user responses includes a series of displays and user actions, and is defined by a relatively simple user interface. The system maintains a posterior probability distribution that each image in a multimedia database is the target of the search. This distribution is used to select the next images